

Cesar Batalla Elementary School
606 Howard Ave.
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Bill Nos. SB945, SB946, SB947, SB948, SB949 & SB886

2-26-21

Dear Governor Lamont,

I am an educator at Cesar Batalla Elementary school in Bridgeport. I currently teach fourth grade, but have taught second, fifth and sixth grade as well. I have been working in Bridgeport for eighteen years. When I first started, the district had literacy coaches and math coaches to support teachers and student learning. Teachers had printers in the classroom, we had materials for teaching math and literacy, direct instruction for phonics, excellent professional development, plenty of materials for students and collaboration with local businesses.

In the past ten years, Bridgeport Public school's funding has been slashed by millions of dollars yearly. Programs have disappeared such as the Family Resource Center which provided books, clothes, and furniture for folks who had been subject to a fire, or homeless folks who were moving into an apartment. Backpacks of food were sent home with some students for their families for the weekend.

Special Education teachers have been let go, leaving the remaining Special Education teachers with 50 plus students to service. ESL teaches have been cut with the same effect. Speech pathologists and occupational therapists are spread so thinly that they barely get to see their students. Literacy and math coaches have been reassigned to teaching positions, leaving teachers and students with no support. Professional development has virtually disappeared with no Literacy or Math coaches.

Paraprofessionals (teacher's aides) have been cut drastically, leaving primary teachers with 29 students to manage with no help. Printers disappeared and copiers stopped being serviced. Teachers had to run around the building to make copies, or not make them at all.

When breakfast in the classroom started, we were at the beginning of this steep decline. We began the program with foods that included protein sources like eggs, cheese and sausage. Within two years breakfasts turned into sweets, like banana bread, cinnamon buns, chocolate cake, French toast, and pancakes. These kinds of foods prepare the students for sluggish minds and diabetes.

Things are so bad now that I have not had any consistent materials to teach the math curriculum with. I use a bit of this and that which I have to search for and create in

order to deliver the lessons. This year we were given a pilot math program that we received in October and had to begin using it with no training. Being that so much of it had to be taught to children virtually, the rollout was frustrating and the outcome has been that students missed a lot of learning time. Pilot programs are free though, so here we are! This is the third pilot program that we have tried. The lack of consistency shows in how little number sense our students have. It is always the STUDENTS who are hurt by this!

We are the largest district in the state. The community is largely poor and vastly diverse.

We need funding. Our students need funding! Why bother to test these children when they are not getting proper support?

Sincerely,

Andrea Woodman Osker
Fourth Grade Teacher
Cesar Batalla School